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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

The rule of law at the national and international levels

Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Note verbale dated 20 April 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General and, on behalf of Bangladesh in its capacity as Chair of the Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, has the honour to transmit herewith the text of the resolution entitled "Giving an identity to the 230 million children without a civil status: one of the major challenges of the humanitarian crisis in the twenty-first century", adopted unanimously on 23 March 2016 by the 134th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, held in Lusaka (see annex).

The Permanent Mission requests that the present note verbale and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 68, 85 and 124.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 20 April 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and French]

Giving an identity to the 230 million children without a civil status: one of the major challenges of the humanitarian crisis in the twenty-first century

Resolution adopted unanimously on 23 March 2016 by the 134th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, held in Lusaka

The 134th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Alarmed by the existence, according to UNICEF estimates, of more than 230 million children under five years of age without a legal identity because they were not registered at birth and by the fact that one in every seven children registered in the world does not have a birth certificate attesting to his/her legal identity,

Observing that without a civil status, these children are severely hampered throughout their lives (unable to go to school, vote, marry, receive welfare benefits, inherit, etc.) and fall victim to trafficking (illegal adoption, prostitution and criminal networks), which is further exacerbated in situations of humanitarian crisis,

Considering that having a reliable, comprehensive and lasting civil registry is a necessary prerequisite for drawing up credible electoral lists and, as a consequence, the legitimacy of electoral processes,

Concerned about the "black holes" in statistics caused by the absence of registration of these children, which disrupts the planning and the management of public services for children,

Recalling different provisions and instruments under international law, in particular:

- Article 24, paragraph 2, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights adopted on 16 December 1966 by the UN General Assembly,
- Article 7, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989,
- Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which the IPU fully supports, including target 16.9, "By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration",
- The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Protocols, especially the Fourth Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War,
- The 1977 Protocol relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts,

Also alarmed by the tremendous impact of humanitarian crises, particularly in situations of conflict, on the most vulnerable groups, especially women and children,

Convinced of the absolute need to fully meet the needs of those children in terms of assistance and protection through the mandates of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations,

1. *Calls on* parliaments to request their governments to put in place measures to inform parents of the need to register children at birth and remove all barriers to the registration of children in registry offices regardless of nationality, race, ethnicity, language, religion or social status;

2. *Requests* parliaments to adopt laws to ensure the issuance of birth certificates free of charge or, at least, to reduce to a minimum the cost of birth registration;

3. *Calls for* registry offices to be set up as close as possible to homes by distributing them throughout the country with as a wide coverage as possible;

4. *Recommends* that parliaments take measures to allow women to register births;

5. *Calls for* support for the implementation of applications for mobile devices that allow authorized persons (e.g. midwives, village leaders and school principals) to register births;

6. *Invites* parliaments to promote campaigns on regularizing the status of children without a legal identity through roving public hearings that move from village to village;

7. *Calls on* parliaments to ensure adequate funding for civil registry, including moving towards the digitization of registration where possible;

8. *Urges* in particular parties to armed conflict to respect schools and hospitals and to provide unrestricted access for humanitarian assistance and to give humanitarian personnel all the facilities required to carry out their work;

9. *Calls on* governments and parties to conflict to meet their obligations in conformity with international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law, in particular the obligations set forth in the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols of 1977 and 2005;

10. *Strongly urges* the IPU to commit to monitoring developments on this issue.